



City of Seattle

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Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor  
**Department of Planning and Development**  
D. M. Sugimura, Director

**CITY OF SEATTLE  
ANALYSIS AND DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR  
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

**Application Number:** 2500631  
**Applicant Name:** Jim Maxwell, Woodland Park Zoo  
**Address of Proposal:** 5500 Phinney Avenue North

**SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTIONS**

Master Use Permit to establish use for future construction of a 5,600 sq. ft. building to house a historic carousel with a viewing area, assembly area and restrooms (Woodland Park Zoo). Project includes an Addendum, dated March 10, 2005, to an Environmental Impact Statement dated December 31, 2003.

The following approval is required:

**SEPA to approve, condition or deny pursuant to [25.05.660](#) – Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) Chapter [25.05](#)**

**SEPA DETERMINATION:** ☐ Exempt ☐ DNS ☒ EIS <sup>1</sup>

☐ DNS with conditions

☐ DNS involving non-exempt grading or demolition or  
involving another agency with jurisdiction

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<sup>1</sup> On March 10, 2005, DPD published a [Notice of Adoption](#) of the Woodland Park Zoo Long Range Plan Final Revised Environmental Impact Statement (LRP FREIS), published December, 2003. A project-specific addendum was also prepared to supplement the FREIS. Both documents are available for public review at the DPD Public Resource Center.

## Project Description

The applicant proposes a one-story, 35' tall structure to house a historic carousel and other ancillary space, including restrooms and 840 sq.ft. of activity space.

## Vicinity and Site

The project is located near the North Entry of Woodland Park Zoo, in the Phinney Ridge neighborhood. The building is proposed to be located at the north end of the “North Meadow”. The Zoo’s main walking loop currently wraps the building site to the west and north, and to the east is a 10' high grassy berm that spills into the meadow to the south.

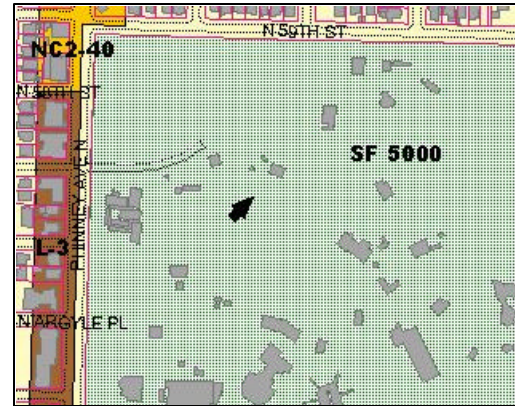
The zoo site is bounded by N. 50th Street on the south, Phinney Ave N. on the west, N. 59th Street on the north, and Aurora Avenue N. on the east. Various portions of the site are identified as Environmentally Critical Areas (ECA, Steep Slope and Wildlife Habitat). The nearest steep slope is about 450 feet from the site.

The zoo is located on City of Seattle Parks land, in a Single Family zone with a minimum lot size of 5000 sq. ft. (SF 5000). The wider neighborhood surrounding the zoo is primarily SF 5000. To the west across Phinney Ave N is a narrow band of properties zoned Lowrise 3 (L3), which transitions to Neighborhood Commercial 2 with a 40-foot base height limit (NC2-40) at about N 59th St. Properties to the south of the zoo are zoned primarily Lowrise 2 and 3. Aurora Avenue N. is a limited access state highway, and Woodland Park is across Aurora Ave to the east.

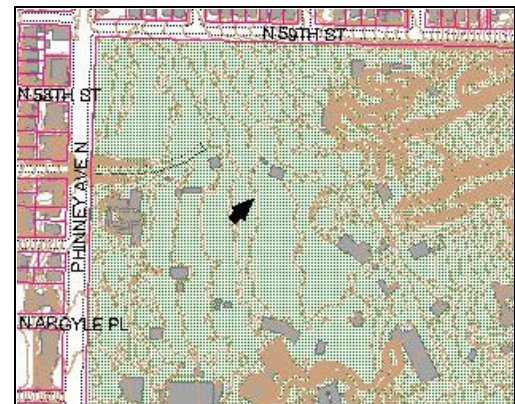
The site is served by public transit. Metro route [5](#) passes the zoo on Phinney Ave N, and route [44](#) passes nearby on N. 46th St. to the south.

## ANALYSIS – SEPA

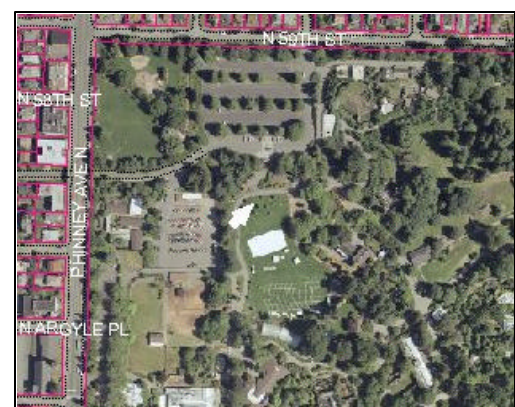
The City of Seattle requires a State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) analysis for a development of more than 4000 sq. ft. of nonresidential development in a Single Family zone, according to Director’s Rule [23-2000](#) and SMC [25.05.800](#). Seattle Parks and Recreation published a Final Revised Environmental Impact Statement (FREIS) in December 2003, related to Woodland Park Zoo’s Long



**Figure 1.** Vicinity zoning



**Figure 2.** Local topography



**Figure 3.** Aerial view

Range Plan (LRP 2002). The FREIS describes the current proposal as a component of the “preferred alternative”, and identifies mitigations associated with the preferred alternative. DPD has also reviewed the record related to the City Hearing Examiner’s findings and decision in the appeal by the Phinney Ridge Community Council and Michael W. Gendler from an EIS adequacy determination by the Superintendent, Department of Parks and Recreation, regarding the Woodland Park Zoo LRP 2002 (Hearing Examiner Files [W-02-001 and 002](#)). DPD has also reviewed an addendum to the FREIS, focused on the carousel. DPD received a letter from one neighborhood resident. This information and the experience of the lead agency form the basis for this analysis and decision. This report anticipates short and long-term adverse impacts from the proposal.

### Short-term Impacts

The following temporary or construction-related impacts are expected: decreased air quality due to increased dust and other suspended air particulates during construction; potential soil erosion during excavation and general site work; increased runoff; tracking of mud onto adjacent streets by construction vehicles; increased demand on traffic and parking from construction equipment and personnel; conflict with normal pedestrian and vehicular movement adjacent to the site; increased noise; and consumption of renewable and non-renewable resources. Due to the temporary nature and limited scope of these impacts, they are not considered significant (SMC Section [25.05.794](#)). Although not significant, these impacts are adverse.

The SEPA Overview Policy (SMC [25.05.665 D](#)) states, “where City regulations have been adopted to address an environmental impact, it shall be presumed that such regulations are adequate to achieve sufficient mitigation”, subject to limitations. Several adopted City codes and/or ordinances provide mitigation for some of the identified impacts. Specifically these are: the Stormwater, Grading and Drainage Control Code (grading, site excavation and soil erosion); Street Use Ordinance (watering streets to suppress dust, obstruction of the rights-of-way during construction); Building Code (construction standards); and Noise Ordinance (construction noise). Compliance with these codes and ordinances will be adequate to achieve sufficient mitigation of potential adverse impacts. Thus, mitigation pursuant to SEPA is not necessary for these impacts. However, more detailed discussion of some impacts is appropriate.

**Construction Noise.** The limits of the construction area are about 600 feet from the nearest residential uses across Phinney Ave N. and N. 59<sup>th</sup> St. Noise associated with construction of the building will not likely adversely affect surrounding uses in the area. DPD therefore finds the Noise Ordinance to be adequate to mitigate the potential noise impacts.

**Parking.** The site abuts Phinney Ave N. and N. 59<sup>th</sup> St., categorized respectively as a minor arterial and a nonarterial by the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDoT). On Phinney Ave N, parking is provided on both sides of the street. On N. 59<sup>th</sup> St., parking is provided on the north side only. The revised Final Revised EIS includes a March 2003 parking demand study conducted by the Transpo Group. The study determines that parking demand by zoo visitors and staff currently exceeds on-site parking supply approximately 100 days every year. The study also notes that zoo visitors often park on surrounding streets even when closer on-site parking is available, and that such behavior is affected in

large part by the \$3.50 fee assessed by the Zoo for on-site parking. Peak zoo visitation occurs primarily on weekends and during special events.

The parking analysis does not identify levels of on-street parking utilization in the Phinney Ridge neighborhood, particularly in the vicinity of the North Entry. It's reasonable to assume that this neighborhood experiences its highest levels of zoo-related on-street parking on weekends and during special events. On-site parking is often underutilized and therefore available, particularly on weekdays. The addendum states that the project's construction-related parking is to be located on site and that it is to be provided free of charge. Provision of on-site parking for construction-related vehicles adequately addresses any short-term parking impacts, and no mitigation is therefore necessary in this regard.

**Construction Vehicles.** Existing City code (SMC [11.62](#)) requires truck activities to use arterial streets to every extent possible. The subject site fronts N. 59<sup>th</sup> St., close to Phinney Ave N, and traffic impacts resulting from the construction related truck traffic will be of short duration and mitigated by enforcement of SMC [11.62](#). As proposed, any impact by construction vehicles is sufficiently mitigated by enforcement of the provisions of SMC [11.62](#).

City code (SMC [11.74](#)) provides that material hauled in trucks not be spilled during transport. The City requires that a minimum of one foot of "freeboard" (area from level of material to the top of the truck container) be provided in loaded uncovered trucks which minimizes the amount of spilled material and dust from the truck bed en route to or from a site. No further conditioning of the grading/excavation element of the project is warranted pursuant to SEPA policies.

Other short-term impacts not noted here as mitigated by codes, ordinances or conditions (e.g. increased use of energy and natural resources) are not sufficiently adverse to warrant further mitigation.

**Animal Impacts.** A central component of the Zoo's mission is to foster the survival of various threatened and endangered species, mostly exotic, within controlled environments. Given the Zoo's professional expertise in similar developments, construction of the carousel is not likely to have any adverse impact on the continued care of these animals. DPD therefore determines that no further conditioning is warranted in this regard.

#### Long-term Impacts

Long-term or use-related impacts are also anticipated from the proposal: increased bulk and scale on the site; minor increase in ambient noise due to increased human activity; loss of vegetation; and increased energy consumption.

The likely long-term impacts are typical of this scale of development, and DPD expects them to be mitigated by the City's adopted codes and/or ordinances. Specifically these are: the Land Use Code (aesthetic impacts, height, setbacks, parking); and the Seattle Energy Code (long-term energy consumption). However, more detailed discussion of some of these impacts is appropriate.

**Aesthetic Impacts.** The carousel building is designed in accordance with the architectural guidelines on pg. 61 of the LRPDP. The applicant also presented the project to the Seattle Design Commission on October 5, 2000 for schematic review. The Commission provided the following feedback.

- *Recognizing the difficult siting decisions the design team has made, [the Commission] is concerned that the sounds of the carousel could be disturbing to the animals.*
  - *Proponents stated that the original band organ will not be activated or installed. The program criteria stated that there can be no auditory impact to the outside, and this criteria is based on the operating principles of the zoo.*
- *Realizes that the proponents favor the pre-fabricated structure, due to budget concerns, but does not feel that the structure is appropriate for the site. Is concerned that the structure would hide the crown of the carousel. Feels that the pre-fabricated design does not offer any opportunities for the parties to spill out from the structure.*
  - *Proponents stated that a custom built structure would not be extensively dissimilar from the selected pre-fabricated structure. Further stated that the height of the structure is dictated by building code, the pitched roof is preferable, and the slope of the pitch is determined by the prefabricated design. Further stated that when viewed from 100 feet away, the crown of the carousel would be visible.*
- *Agrees with the previous Commissioner comments, but also feels that pre-fabrication is appropriate. Appreciates the dark colors, glass, and planted trellis that will allow the structure to disappear, and the carousel will become visible.*
  - *Proponents stated that the underside of the roof would be painted a dark color as well.*
- *Feels that the proponents should pull the building away from the earth mound to allow the party rooms to open up onto the landscape.*
  - *Proponents stated that the project was built into landscape to hide the structure.*
- *Does not believe that this is a type of structure that could be built into the landscape; the building is an object. Feels that the edges around the structure should be softened, and the rental party room should be expanded and introduced to the landscape.*
  - *Proponents stated that the program hopes to enclose the party spaces to provide some security.*

DPD land use staff consulted with Design Commission staff and determined that the applicant had satisfied requirements for Commission review.

**Parking and Traffic Impacts.** Considered in the context of the zoo at large, the carousel is a component that would support the Zoo's recreational purpose and its mission to engage visitors and enhance their overall experience at the Zoo. While the carousel itself would not likely draw visitors, it would likely increase the Zoo's overall appeal to visitors and increase its capacity to serve them. Proposed rooms adjacent to the carousel would likely be used for children's parties, and would therefore increase visitation somewhat. The FREIS considers increases in zoo visitation for a scenario that includes the carousel (see pg 58-59 of the FREIS). The FREIS also proposes mitigations, namely a parking garage, to be built according to timelines laid out in the Long Range Development Plan. Considering that the proposal fits within the scope of the preferred alternative and its proposed mitigations, DPD determines that no further mitigation is warranted in this regard.

**Animal impacts.** A central component of the Zoo's mission is to foster the survival of various threatened and endangered species, mostly exotic, within controlled environments. Operation of the carousel is not likely to have any adverse impact on the continued care of these animals. The proposed carousel is to be enclosed, and any music or other noise is to be well contained. DPD therefore determines that no further conditioning is warranted in this regard.

**Plant Impacts.** The project proposal involves removal of lawn only. No exceptional trees are to be affected.

### **DECISION – SEPA**

The application is approved.

### **CONDITIONS – SEPA**

No further conditions.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ (signature on file) Date: March 31, 2005  
Scott A. Ringgold, Land Use Planner  
Department of Planning and Development

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